

wherein said e-mail includes an expiration period such that when said recipient does not receive said e-mail within said expiration period, automatically purging said e-mail at said mail server.

- 34  
61. (New) The method of claim ~~58~~<sup>31</sup> wherein said agent is a virtual pet, and further, wherein said virtual pet is animated.
- 35  
62. (New) The method of claim ~~58~~<sup>31</sup> wherein said agent is provided with a predetermined life span.
- 36  
63. (New) The method of claim ~~62~~<sup>35</sup> further including the step of generating a message when said life span expires.
- 37  
64. (New) The method of claim ~~63~~<sup>35</sup> further including the step of displaying said message when said life span expires.
- 38  
65. (New) The method of claim ~~58~~<sup>31</sup> further including the step of displaying one or more predetermined messages selected by said agent, wherein said selected one or more predetermined messages is indicative of a state of said agent.
- 39  
66. (New) The method of claim ~~65~~<sup>38</sup> wherein said agent selects one or more predetermined messages based on said plurality of agent parameters.--

REMARKS

Reconsideration is respectfully requested. Claims 1-24 and 33-66 are pending. Claims 25-32 are cancelled by the Examiner per restriction requirement. Claims 33-66 are new.

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For the reasons set forth below, Applicants respectfully submit that all pending claims are allowable.

I. Election/Restriction

Applicants herein acknowledge the Examiner's restriction requirement and cancellation of claims 25-32. Accordingly, claims 25-32 are cancelled from the present application without prejudice.

II. Anticipation Rejections

Claims 1-24 are rejected as anticipated under 35 USC §102(b) by U.S. Patent No. 5,958,005 ("Thorne"). See Office Action, pp.3-4.

For the reasons set forth below, Applicants traverse the Examiner's rejections and respectfully submit that pending claims 1-24 are allowable.

The Thorne reference was filed on July 17, 1997. On the other hand, the present application claims priority under 35 USC §119 to Japanese Application No. P08-355048 filed on December 26, 1996, and to Japanese Application No. P09-166638 filed on June 9, 1997. As can be seen, the filing dates of each of the priority applications for the present application is prior to the filing date of the Thorne reference of July 17, 1997 which is the earliest effective filing date for the Thorne reference as a prior art reference.

To this end, Applicants are presently preparing a certified English translation of each of the two priority applications (Japanese Application Nos. P08-355048 and P09-166638) each of which, Applicants will furnish for the Examiner's review as soon as the translation is available.

Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 1-24 are allowable.

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III. New Claims 33-66

New independent claim 33 is directed to a combination including the steps of detecting one or more events corresponding to one or more of a plurality of agent parameters of a virtual agent, said agent parameters configured to determine the behavior of said virtual agent; and updating said plurality of agent parameters with each detected event such that the behavior of said virtual agent is continuously modified with each detected event. New independent **claim 49** is directed to a combination including the steps of generating a virtual agent having a plurality of agent parameters, said agent parameters configured to determine the behavior of said virtual agent; displaying said virtual agent on a display unit; interacting with said virtual agent on said display unit; and updating said plurality of agent parameters based on said interacting step such that the behavior of said virtual agent is continuously modified. Finally, new independent **claim 58** is directed to a combination including the steps of receiving a send command designating the transmission of an e-mail to a recipient; appending a plurality of agent parameters to a main mail text of said e-mail, said agent parameters controlling the behavior of an agent delivering said e-mail; transmitting said e-mail to said recipient; automatically returning an indication when said recipient has received said e-mail; and modifying said agent parameters based on said agent interacting with said recipient.

As understood, none of the cited references disclose or otherwise fairly suggest the claimed combinations as set forth in claims 33, 49 and 58 shown above. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that claims 33, 49, 58, and claims 34-48, 50-57 and 59-66 dependent therefrom, respectively, are allowable.

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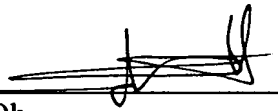
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PATENT

For the foregoing reasons it is submitted that all of the claims are now in condition for allowance and the Examiner's early re-examination and reconsideration are respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,


LIMBACH & LIMBACH L.L.P.

By:    
Seong-Kun Oh  
Recognition under 37 CFR §10.9(b)

June 20, 2000  
Our File: SONY-6900

**CERTIFICATE OF MAILING**

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service as first class mail in an envelope addressed to: Assistant Commissioner for Patents, Washington, D.C. 20231, on June 20, 2000.

Dated: 6/20/00 By:   
Ta-Tanisha L. Moore

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**Expires: May 15, 2001**

  
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